



Parent Handbook

Keshar 2024-2025

Keshar Vision and Values

Keshar: the Center for Jewish Life enables the exploration of one's evolving Jewish self, grounded in *connection, community, holiness and love*.

The following values undergird everything we do and believe:

1. Keshar – Connection

We see every experience and person as a snapshot in the continuum and narrative of Jewish time and life, made more holy through our relationship to Torah, tradition, God, and community.

2. Ahava – Love

We provide a supportive, inclusive, and non-competitive environment that values all individuals for their uniqueness and supports them on their individual journeys.

3. Kedusha – Spirituality

We recognize that we are part of something much larger than ourselves that we access through prayer, gratitude, meditation, questions, wonder, awe and seeing the Divine in every human being.

4. Kehilah – Community

The creation of shared experiences connecting us to one another, to tradition, God and the world.

Grade Level Descriptions

Please find the description of the curriculum for each grade [here](#).

Schedule

Grade	Jewish Life	Hebrew
K-2	Sun 9-10:45 or Sun 10:45-12:30 or Mon 4:15-6	<i>Hebrew Through Movement is included in Jewish Life component</i>
3	Sun 9-10:45 or Sun 10:45-12:30 or Mon 4:15-6	<i>choose a half-hour virtual slot within the following times</i> OR <i>one hour in-person</i>
4-6	Sun 9-10:45 or Sun 10:45-12:30 or Tue 4:15-6	
7	Tue 6-7:45	
8-12	Every other Tue 6-7:45	Sun 10-1 Mon-Thu 4-7 Sun 12:30-1:30 Wed 4:30-5:30

[Here](#) are the meeting dates for 8th-12th grade. Once you sign up for your specific dates and times, you will receive your class assignments and Zoom links for Hebrew, if applicable.

Attendance

Kesher is a comprehensive program that begins in Kindergarten and ends in 12th grade. We encourage families to enroll by 3rd grade to become a part of our *kehillah*, our community, and reap the benefits of friendship and connection and begin to learn Hebrew formally. Students who do not attend Kesher before 3rd grade will miss out on vital learning and community-building opportunities which provide the foundation of Jewish education in the upper grades.

We encourage students to enroll in Kesher as early as they are able. Students who attend Kesher regularly beginning in third grade or earlier will be on track to receive a B'nei Mitzvah date during their 5th grade year. For students who are unable to meet the attendance expectations leading up to B'nei Mitzvah we encourage families to discuss their particular situation with the Kesher director or clergy as early as possible

Your child's attendance will directly correlate with how much they learn.

Any student who misses 2 consecutive classes will receive an email from their teacher or our Director of Experiential Education.

Any student who misses 3 consecutive classes will receive an email from either the Director of Kesher or the Director of Experiential Education.

Derech Eretz - Respectful behavior

A central component of our curriculum in every grade is *derech erez*, thoughtful and respectful behavior. *Derech erez* applies to all people and things with which someone comes into contact. Translated into action, *derech erez* means that students treat with respect their classmates, teachers, *madrichim* (teachers assistants), professional staff, clergy, custodial staff and visitors. Moreover, students should exhibit respect for property, whether it be furniture, school displays, materials or supplies. *Derech Eretz* means that students adopt appropriate behavior as they enter the synagogue or Zoom room and especially when they enter the sanctuary. The Zoom room becomes an extension of the Temple and we know that students will respect the use of their camera, background, the chat and any other aspects that are part of online learning.

We would appreciate your reinforcing with your student(s) this central Jewish value, explaining that your expectations of them while in the synagogue are exactly the same as your expectations of them in regular school, as guests in someone's home and in a sacred space.

Zoom Learning

The Hebrew component of our program will take place over Zoom, as well as some specific classes throughout the year where the students will benefit from being at home. We recognize that learning on Zoom is a different kind of environment and experience. All Hebrew classes will have 4 students or fewer. This allows us to see all the students on one screen and provides ample time for the teachers to interact with all students.

The same principles of *derech erez* apply online as well.

Learning Expectations

What we expect from our students:

At Keshet we expect our students to treat themselves and others with *kavod*, respect. By attending regularly, showing up on time, following the classroom *brit* (covenant), and showing courtesy for others, students will demonstrate an acknowledgement of the importance of a mutually positive environment.

In that, we have a zero tolerance policy for bullying. All bullying behaviors will be taken immediately to the director for action.

What students can expect from us;

At Keshet, students are treated with compassion and respect. This means that students' needs are taken into consideration and various tools are available to provide the best learning environment. Mutual respect and trust are the bedrock of how we work together.

Students will have access to resources in every classroom to support their learning and enable them to take breaks as needed.

Anti-Bullying Statement

Keshet does not tolerate bullying in any form. It is entirely contrary to the values and principles we work and live by. All members of the Keshet community have the right to learn in a secure and caring environment. They also have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment.

Bullying is when one person deliberately and repeatedly intimidates or harms another person or group of people. This includes, but is not limited to, conduct that is based on a student's actual or perceived race, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other distinguishing characteristic.

Bullying can appear in many different ways:

- Physical hitting, kicking, shoving, mean hand gestures
- Verbal teasing, taunting, name calling, threatening remarks, spreading rumors
- Indirect excluding or intentionally leaving a person out, getting someone else to bully another person, gossiping
- Cyber using social media or technology to threaten, insult or harass (including sending pictures, messages, or sharing private information meant to intimidate or harass)

Following a bullying incident, the student(s) will work with the Director of Kesher to create a *t'shuvah*, repentance, process to help with their own and their victim's healing.

Discipline

We agree to work with student(s) to demonstrate *anava*, humility and *chesed*, compassion for themselves, their classmates, their teachers and their environment.

At times when appropriate behaviors are not demonstrated, Kesher will undertake the following steps, in order.

- Students will be given 2 warnings.
- Inappropriate behavior will be discussed with the teacher and the student.
- At the discretion of the teacher, the student may be sent to the Director of Kesher or Director of Experiential Education.
- At this point, if the student cannot appropriately return to class or cannot comprehend the challenge their action entails, the student's parents/guardians will be contacted.
- If challenging behavior continues for multiple weeks, the student and parents/guardians will be required to meet with the Director of Kesher to determine a plan of action.

Weather Cancellation

We follow the direction of the Westport Public Schools with regard to school closings.

In the event of the possible closing of school due to weather or any other reason, a decision will be made as early as possible and will be posted on the Temple website. Families will be alerted via text, email and automated voicemail when possible. In general, Temple Israel, and Kesher in particular follows the direction of the Westport Public schools for closures.

Communication

It is critical to the success of our work that we have excellent communication with all of our families.

Additionally, you will receive about two emails a month. The first will be upcoming events and general information for the month in Keshet. The second will be individual emails from your child's educator about what the students have accomplished during class time. Please make sure that we have your proper email on file to ensure that you receive our blasts and can follow along at home with what is happening at Keshet. If at any time you need to update your email address, please [contact](#) the Keshet Administrator.

Students may wish to communicate with their teachers outside of the classroom. They should feel free to contact the teachers via their Temple Israel e-mail address.

Traffic, drop off and early dismissal

All students will enter and leave the building through the Keshet/school entrance, unless otherwise informed. For all drop-offs, parents are welcome to park and walk their children in. They are also welcome to use the drop-off line which runs through the one way road directly in front of the Keshet doors. The drop-off line will begin 10 minutes prior to the start of Keshet. If using the drop off line please do not drop off your child until a staff member/security person is outside of the building and has begun the drop off process.

All parents must come inside the building to pick up their child(ren), except for Tuesday afternoon and evening. You will be told where to pick up your child(ren) based on the day your child(ren) attend(s).

Any student being picked up early from Keshet must be signed out by a parent or guardian in the Keshet office. Students will not be dismissed early without an adult present in the building to pick them up.

Food at Temple Israel

Please note that these guidelines refer only to in person learning. You will need to take this into consideration when your child(ren) is/are on campus.

Please send your student(s) with a reusable water bottle. Cups will not be distributed to students.

We are a peanut and tree nut aware school. Please do not send any foods to school that contain peanuts or tree nuts including, but not limited to: peanuts, tree nuts, peanut butter, baked goods containing peanuts or tree nuts, and foods containing nut sauces or flavoring to be eaten in the classroom, or snacks anywhere else in the building—either before or after Keshet. Please check granola and similar snack bars carefully because many

varieties include peanuts or tree nuts as ingredients. While we make every effort to ensure no such nuts are present in the school, we remain a multi-use facility and cannot guarantee that students will not come in contact with peanuts or tree nuts (residue) inside the building.

Allergies to other foods (including but not limited to: eggs, dairy products, soy, seeds, fruits, or gluten) will be handled on a case-by-case basis in that student's classroom. Certain restrictions may be placed on all the students in that classroom (in addition to the prohibition on peanuts and tree nuts described above).

If your student needs an EpiPen or other allergy related medication, we need you to:

- Make sure your student brings their EpiPen or medication to Kesher.
- Supply us with instructions for using the EpiPen or other allergy related medication.

Additional guidance on related procedures will be shared at the beginning of each year.

Health

Any student attending Kesher in person must be fever free for 24 hours without the aid of medication.

If your student is sick and is unable to attend Kesher on a given day, please contact the Kesher Administrator so they can help them stay caught up.

Please inform the Director of Kesher of any identified health needs so those can be met.

Vaccinations must be up to date in the same manner that they must be for enrollment in public school

Cell phones

Cell phones are NOT permitted to be used by students during Kesher hours, unless authorized for a specific lesson/program by your child's teacher. All phones will remain in backpacks or otherwise put away during class. If a class is not able to handle having their phones in class, the educator will collect them during class and return them at the end. If your student is on their cell phone during class and it becomes a disruption, the teacher will communicate with the parents. Should you need to reach your student during Kesher hours, you must [contact](#) the Kesher Administrator.